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## Orting's New Phone System - On the Cutting Edge



Some may consider the failure of Orting's previous phone system and voicemail as a blessing in disguise, as the facility takes advantage of tomorrow's technology today. The Washington Soldier's Home and Colony is one of the first state agencies to implement Voice Over Internet Protocol, commonly referred to as "Voice Over IP." Voice Over IP connects telephone systems via computer local area networks (LANs), and is today's emerging technology.

Implementing the new phone system was a complex task that was made possible with the superb support of Orting plant manager, Bill Arthur and his talented staff, and the Information Services Team of Bob Murphy

and Dale Cain. Bill and his staff served as the facility points of contact and helped resolve many issues as they arose. Bob and Dale focused on resolving technical problems and assisting in the phone programming. The great effort of each team member resulted in the

new phones being successfully integrated into the agency network.

The staff at Orting have several new features; such as whisper paging, working voicemail, and six-person conferencing. Whisper paging allows a staff member to break into an ongoing call at

the facility for emergent reasons. (Staff members can disable this feature if they do not want to be disturbed.) There are also many other features available with this new phone system, for more information please contact Dale Cain at (360)725-2183.

## Construction Progresses

*Building 13:* The Auditorium portion of Building 13 has been completely removed from the site. The building was taken down section by section to ensure the integrity of the dining room & kitchen portions of the building remained structurally sound. The demolition was successful and took place without incident. Residents and staff members were given post cards with a nostalgic photo of Building 13 and the inscription "*Thanks for*

*the Memories*".

*Site Preparation:* Excavation for much of the new facility sewer

system is nearly complete, and necessary piping has been put in place. As

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The front entrance of the Auditorium was the last section to go.

## Construction Continued

soon as all the foundations have been poured, you will see the large mound of dirt (known as Mt. Retsil) begin to decrease in size as it will be used for backfill.

Currently, the floor slabs are being poured and provide a good image of the actual size of the facility.

- *Staff Tours:* Recently, the staff tours have been concentrated in and around the new kitchen/ dining building, as this is where most of the construction activity is taking place. Members of the kitchen staff have had a chance to walk the tunnel and view what will become their new kitchen. They have provided favorable input on the building with some comments on how to improve the final product.

- *Parking:* Parking continues to be a challenge as various components of the project are put in place. The area behind Building 10 (the newer nursing building) will be closed temporarily so a new power line can be placed to eventually



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Once the building has a chance to “dry”, the construction team will be able to

provide power to that building. During this closure, sewer manholes will also be placed at the junction of the drive between the Sinclair (superintendent) House and Building 10.

- *Pedestrian Walkways:* Look for a slightly revised path past the new kitchen as the construction team needs a bit more elbow room at the end of one of the new facilities wings. The viewing station will move in closer to the kitchen.

- *Kitchen Construction:* Construction on the building is moving along well on the inside.

tackle the roofing project.

- *LEEDS Issues:* WDVA has submitted plans and certification outline to the General Administration website. This information will advertise the agency's participation in the “Sustainable Construction” process. This concept advocates utilization of renewable resources and local vendors as well as the planned “Natural Ventilation” which will avoid the use of toxic chemicals and expensive equipment in providing a comfortable atmosphere for all residents.

## Seasons Greetings!

The Holiday Season is upon us, the season when many of us rush around in preparation for gatherings and celebrations. As we enjoy our family and friends, I'd like to invite all of us to take a moment and reflect on the past year. Over the past year, you and your co-workers have:

- Assisted homeless veterans with shelter and employment.
- Provided high-quality long-term care to deserving veterans in the State Veterans Homes.
- Kept the finances of veterans in order - keeping them from becoming homeless veterans.
- Improved the financial well-being of veterans or their widows who now receive additional VA compensation or pension.
- Managed the agency's finances effectively to ensure WDVA remains a “good deal for taxpayers”.
- Kept a veteran from going back to jail by linking them with support services.
- Highlighted important information resulting in a veteran or family member accessing a benefit they didn't know was available.
- Successfully completed another round of VA surveys in all three Veterans Homes.

Thanks to you, our work is making a difference in the lives of veterans and their families each and every day! Thank you for your dedication, your hard work and your compassion for serving veterans. May your holidays be filled with happiness and your new year be bright.

*John King*

# Field Services Division

Your WDVA co-workers in Field Services have been busy serving some of the 670,000 veterans who live in Washington State.



**A Veteran Services Office**, based out of the Seattle VA Regional Office, is run by a Program Manager and four staff members. They work as service officers for veterans who need help filing VA claims and as community coordinators who travel to communities and work directly with veterans. In addition to our staff members, WDVA contracts with seven Veterans Service Organizations (with numerous post and chapter locations) and eight Independent Contractors (Service Officers). This network of service providers is spread across Washington State and is instrumental in helping veterans get the help they need without driving long distances.

The **Veterans Estate Management Program** is based in the Olympia Service Center. The Federal VA, for a variety of reasons (examples are chronic homelessness and drug or alcohol abuse), can rate a veteran as being "incompetent" to handle their personal finances.

Then a fiduciary, such as WDVA, is appointed to ensure a veteran's basic living needs are met, often preventing them from becoming homeless. A team of six staff provide these fiduciary services at a considerably lower rate than many private companies.

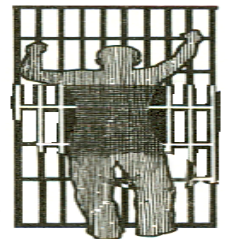
Veterans needing **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** counseling can use WDVA's a one-of-a-kind outreach and counseling program designed to provide confidential counseling services to more than 70,000 Washington state veterans with war-era and PTSD-related problems. Under the PTSD Program Manager's direction, WDVA contracts with 26 specialized counselors to help veterans resolve their war-related PTSD readjustment issues.

Also housed in the Olympia Service Center are the **Homeless Veteran Grant Programs**. Through Federal Department of Labor grants, WDVA received \$249,565 to serve homeless women veterans from year to year and \$300,000 to serve all homeless veterans from year to year. Staff member coordinate with a variety of service providers and non-profit organizations to assist veterans in seeking necessary counseling, housing assistance and most importantly employment opportunities. Each grant is based on the principle of stopping the cycle of homelessness by helping veterans become employable.

The newest initiative in the

**Field Services** division is a partnership with DSHS to ensure eligible veterans or widows receive Aid & Attendance benefits from the Federal VA. WDVA & DSHS are actively searching for these veterans & widows in nursing homes in Washington State. To date nine veterans have been removed from the Medicaid roles and been placed under total VA financial responsibility at a saving of \$58,000 in Medicaid resources. More than 70 veterans and surviving spouses have been enrolled into third party liability programs, saving DSHS over \$14,000 of Medicaid resources per month.

In King County, veterans facing jail time can be served by the **Veteran Incarcerated**



**Program (VIP)** a joint project between the King County Veterans Program and WDVA. These staff members identify incarcerated veterans, and if they are eligible, enroll them in the program. Outcomes are measured by early release days (10,169) with a savings of (\$787,792) and a recidivism rate of (16%) compared to the current rate of recidivism of over 50% in 2002.

As always, if you know a veteran who needs assistance or just has some questions about VA benefits, please have them call 1-800-562-2308.



## Spokane News

Recently, the Spokane Veterans Home submitted an application for the Health Professional Loan Repayment & Scholarship Program through the Washington State Department of Health and in late November learned they were selected as a "Priority List Site". Three employees will receive assistance through the loan repayment program. They are:

- Mary Engstrom, LPN 3,
- Patty Madden, LPN 3, and
- Dennis Williams, LPN 3.

The Health Professional Loan Repayment and Scholarship programs were created to address the critical shortage of health care professionals in Washington State. In the Spokane area, like many other areas of the state, recruitment for Registered Nurses is very difficult. The three staff mentioned above are pursuing their career goals and continuing their education by obtaining RN Certification. Mary Engstrom, LPN 3, is a wound care nurse who also assists the resident physician and visiting dentist. Patty Madden, night shift LPN 3, has also been in the health care profession for several years and assists the facility as needed. Dennis Williams, LPN 3, began his health care interest while attending university classes for pre-med. All three are examples of staff that go the extra mile and will enhance the nursing profession with their education, training and expertise.

The Loan Repayment program provides loan repayment assistance to licensed primary care health professionals. The Scholarship program provides scholarships to students training to become primary care health professionals. In return, participants in both programs agree to provide primary health care service in rural or underserved urban areas with designated shortages.

## Sustainability:

Preserving the environment for future generations



In accordance with the Governor's Executive Order, the agency has developed a Sustainability Plan and has included Sustainability in the director's Performance Agreement with the Governor. Alfie Alvarado, Assistant Director for Agency Operations is the Executive Sponsor with April Harris, her Executive Assistant taking the lead in developing and monitoring agency sustainable practices. April will be working with a team comprised of at least one staff member from each of the homes and Central Office. Baselines and measurements will be developed at a meeting is this month.

"Sustainability" and "sustainable development" have been part of local, national, and global discussions for more than a decade. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations

to meet their own needs - In a nutshell, it's preserving the environment for future generations by implementing environmentally friendly practices now.

WDVA has already made headway. All 8.5" by 11" white paper now ordered for the agency is non-chlorine bleached paper. This is significant because the process used to produce the common chlorine bleached paper requires the use of chemicals that convert to dioxin. The dioxin waste finds its way to the air and water via the paper mill's discharged waste. Dioxin is the most toxic compound known to man! Look for more information about paper on the V-NET (Intranet).

April is also interested in hearing from WDVA staff with suggestions for agency sustainable practices, as well as personal stories on how you adopt sustainable practices. Contact April at 360-725-2167 or [april@dva.wa.gov](mailto:april@dva.wa.gov).

## An End of the Year Note from Payroll!

◆ Please be prompt with pay documents, such as time & attendance and leave slips. By keeping us up to date you can help us avoid unnecessary corrections!

◆ W2's will be delivered around 1/10/2004 - please note - they will be mailed separately from your paycheck!

◆ Use your personal holiday (if you have accrued one and if it is approved)! All personal holidays are forfeited at the end of the year, so if you plan to take some time off, be sure to use it!

If you have any questions about this or other payroll information, please don't hesitate to contact your timekeeper or Peggy Challman at 1-800-562-0132



### Guidelines on Absences due to Weather

It appears as though Old Man Winter is arriving faster than expected after such a nice summer and fall. Below are a few reminders on how to deal with absences due to weather.

Frosty mornings, serve as a reminder to get going a few minutes earlier to allow those cars time to defrost and warm up. This is not considered severe inclement weather. If you are late for work due to this type of weather you need to submit a leave slip through the normal leave process.

Leave due to severe inclement weather is addressed in WAC 356-18-115.

If you are unable to report for work due to severe inclement weather or conditions caused by severe inclement weather the following applies:

You may be up to one hour late with no leave penalty. Anything over one hour needs to be covered by a leave slip.

If you are unable to report for work for the entire shift, you need to submit a leave slip for the entire shift.

Leave for severe inclement weather is charged in the following order:

- (a) compensatory or exchange time;
- (b) annual leave;
- (c) sick leave - up to a maximum of three days in any calendar year;
- (d) leave without pay.

If you have additional questions please don't hesitate to call your HR Consultant.

## E-Mail Do's & Don'ts

**Question:** What is an inappropriate message?

**Answer:** In general non-work related messages containing jokes, "chain e-mails", internet greeting cards, or any text that could be offensive or considered as harassment should be dealt with as an Inappropriate Message.



**Question:** I can't help it if someone sends me a bad joke, am I violating a policy by receiving these?

**Answer:** It is your responsibility to tell the sender (if you know who it is) that the message they sent was inappropriate and not to send anymore. You should also delete the message immediately. If you forward the message, even to your own home computer, you are violating policy.

**Question:** Aren't messages received or sent from my agency e-mail account private?

**Answer:** No. Our work equipment is provided to us so we can serve our customers. Information transmitted over the internet can be intercepted by individuals outside the agency or could inadvertently be sent to the wrong e-mail address.

Please remember that we all have a responsibility to provide a respectful workplace for ALL employees and that includes what we enter into our computers and transmit over the e-mail. If you have any questions about e-mail do's and don'ts, please contact your HR Consultant.

**Thanks Everyone! for the most successful campaign in the CFD's 19-year history! 2003 donations have now surpassed \$4.89 million!! WDVAs contributions totaled \$8,637. And, over 3,200 lbs of clothing was gathered for the ICSEW / Workfirst Clothing Drive. Your participation has made a tremendous difference.**



## Reduce Your Risk of Getting the Cold or Flu



- Wash your hands often. Keep them away from your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Take good care of yourself: Eat well, get enough rest, and exercise.
- Encourage people with cold or flu symptoms to cover their mouths when they sneeze or cough. (Or better yet, stay home).
- Stop smoking. Tobacco users are more likely to catch a cold and more likely to have a cold develop

into a more serious infection, such as pneumonia.

- Avoid secondhand smoke. Exposure to secondhand smoke also makes you more susceptible to colds and flu.
- Ask your health care provider about getting a flu shot especially if you are 65 or older or have a chronic illness such as diabetes, asthma, emphysema, heart disease, kidney failure, cystic fibrosis, cancer, or an immune disorder.

For additional information on colds and flu, visit the Center for Disease Control website at <http://www.cdc.gov/nip/Flu/Public.htm#cold>

## ...Is That Really True???

### Some Links to Help You Sort Out Fact From Fiction on the Internet

"Where are you going, Chicken-Little?"

"Oh, The sky is falling!"

"I am going to tell the king."



Got an email from a friend with a hot news item that's just a touch off-kilter? Before you panic and send out your own **blast-o-gram**, *check out the veracity of the story first. It may help put some sanity back into this life we're living.*

- ◆ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - Current Health Related Hoaxes and Rumors. [http://www.cdc.gov/hoax\\_rumors.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/hoax_rumors.htm)
- ◆ HoaxBusters -Published by the Computer Incident Advisory Capability of the US Department of Energy. <http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org/>
- ◆ Internet Scambusters - avoid being taken by Internet scams and fraud. <http://www.scambusters.org/809Scam.html>
- ◆ Netsquirrel - A good resource. Has some of the older legends that live on and on. <http://netsquirrel.com/combatkit/>
- ◆ The Ring of Folklore and Urban Legends - Web Ring of several sites about folklore and urban legends.<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/1401/urbanlegends.html>
- ◆ Urban Legends Reference Page - Lots of information on rumors of the WTC attack and war. <http://www.snopes.com/>



## The Gift of Helping Others

The holiday spirit can last the whole year when you volunteer your time and energy to a charitable group that needs your help. Two of the many reasons why you should volunteer: You're helping others who are less fortunate, and you're involved with people and causes that appeal to you.

You don't have to commit all your free time. Most agencies and organizations will allow you to set your own schedule. A commitment of just two or three hours a week may not seem like much, but they can help make someone's quality of life more than a little bit better.

Look around your community. There is always need for volunteers in animal shelters, religious congregations, hospitals, literacy groups, children's after school clubs and social, mental health and athletic groups. A gift of time to people who need your help can't be gift-wrapped, but it always conveys the clear, if unspoken, message: "To the community with love."